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FILM REPRODUCTION AND SCHOLARSHIP

BY DR. ALBERT C. BAUGH

There was a time when libraries were collections of books and a suitable place to house them. The reader wishing to use a book went to the library and consulted it. If it was produced promptly and he was given decent facilities for reading it, the library had done all it was expected to do. But this was in the days when life was simpler and the needs of the reader and the scholar were more easily satisfied. Today a library, especially a university library, has become something different. Apart from the role which it plays in providing the materials for ordinary undergraduate instruction, its chief function is in connection with the more advanced studies of scholars connected with its faculties and its graduate schools. It has become a research laboratory, and the nature and extent of the work that can be carried on in it is determined to a very great degree by the adequacy of its equipment.

Adequacy is a relative term and it may be said that no library in the world is or ever can be wholly adequate in all the fields in which modern inquiry is pushed. Indeed, the attempt to pursue an investigation into even a limited field soon carries the investigator beyond the resources at hand. Consequently the scholar inevitably has need for books and manuscripts scattered throughout the country and in the repositories abroad. Obviously he cannot visit personally all the libraries in which the books he needs are to be found. The only available copy of a book, a monograph, or even an article in a learned journal, indispensable to the continuation of his investigation, may be a thousand miles or more away. What is to be done?

Fortunately the problem admits of solution. But the solution varies in difficulty with the nature of the material he requires. If the book is not too rare or expensive, he will be able to borrow it for a limited time through the system of inter-library loans. But he will not be able to keep it very long. Two weeks is ordinarily the period of such a loan. If he wishes to consult it again, he must borrow it a second time, and it is to be hoped—though this is by no means always the case—that he will not need to refer to it repeatedly.

If the book, however, happens to be rare, and naturally if his own library is a large one it is the rare books that he must get from elsewhere, the solution is not easy. Libraries quite properly will not lend their rare books. Insurance is not an adequate recompense for a book lost, if the book cannot be replaced. In such cases, the scholar has generally had recourse to photographic or photostatic reproduction. This is a very satisfactory method.

Its only drawback is its expensiveness. Unless he is a man of considerable means he cannot resort to this method indiscriminately. Generally he confines his use of photostats to basic documents and texts, and breathes a quiet prayer of thanks if the text is not too long.

Within the last few years, however, there has been developed a humble application of the moving picture machine that promises to be a great boon to the scholar. It has been found that certain kinds of small motion picture camera, no larger and no more expensive than thousands of such cameras in private use, can be employed to photograph a page of a book or manuscript. The exposure is made on the ordinary moving picture film (non-inflammable). The image is then thrown on a screen, or in some cases projected on a sheet of paper on a desk or table. All that is needed is the projector, and such projectors are not very expensive. One of the best can be had for less than a hundred dollars.

It is true that such reproductions are not so convenient to handle as the photostat. They must be read in a darkened room and they can only be used with a projector. But they have the advantage of compactness. A book of three or four hundred pages can be photographed on a roll of film one inch in diameter. And most advantageous of all, reproduction by this method is very much cheaper than by any other process yet devised. The actual cost of the film (including developing) is about one quarter of a cent per exposure. Libraries equipped to furnish such reproductions find that they can make them at a cost to the purchaser varying from two to four cents an exposure, according to the size of the order.

A number of the larger libraries have such apparatus now in use. Before long it is safe to predict that every university library in the country will be equipped with a camera and at least one projector. Yale already has several projectors for the use of the faculty and advanced students. Obviously our library should have so valuable an adjunct to research.

SPECIAL BENEFACTIONS

To encourage the alumni and other friends who wish to aid the Library, the University Trustees in 1923 made formal provision for Life Memberships (\$200); for Graduate's Decennial Contributions (\$1000); Graduate's Endowment Contributions (\$2000); Library Founder's Contributions (\$5000); and Library Benefactor's Contributions (\$10,000).

In 1927 Mr. David Milne presented the first Graduate's Endowment Contribution, a fund of \$2,000 for the purchase of books dealing with Scottish history and literature.